7/6/71

Mr. Richard Salant, President
CBS News
524 W. 27 Street
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Mr. Salant,

I appreciate the promptness of your July 1 response to my June 28 letter. I wish I could say more for it.

In describing your coverage of The Pentagon Papers as "full and continuing", you understate. All the major media, CBS included, in handling this vital issue were true to the traditional responsibilities of the American press. The entire country is almost as much in your collective debt for this as we are to those papers whose travail is not yet over for their parts in bringing this suppression to light.

However, you avoided and your evaded, and I suggest your phrase "in which among other things you seem to be requesting" indicates this was not accidental.

There is one aspect of this flap not touched upon by any media, to the bestof my knowledge. It is to this that I referred in citing your unquestioning presentation of Herbert Klein. This is further treated in Chief Justice Burger's opinion. It is an area that may well figure in coming action against the Times, Post and perhaps other papers, for to the unknowing and unquestioning, it may appear to be a legitimate criticism of the methods used and not used by these papers. As I said, I think I holdthe track record in the attempted use of this law. The government has compiled for me an incredible of dishonesty, duplicty, misrepresentaion and, I think, perjury in it. From the beginning, I attempted to background CBS News on all of this, even given it essential proofs in confidence and in advance of court use.. I think that even too late, there should be major-media treatment of the federally-arranged futility of seeking to use the excellent "Freedom of Information" Act and of the open disregard of the expressed will of the Congress as embodied in this law and its legislative history. It is this that I asked. I hope you will reconsider, at least to the extent of having one of your reporter, like George Herman, who I did background, see if there is what CBS could regard as legitimate news interest and value in it. Until you explore, you do not know, do you?

What you disregard entirely is my proper request for equal time to present the other side on the James Earl Ray-Martin Luther King case. Without any questioning at all, in what amounts to a propaganda presentation, CBS has presented Percy Foreman, who was saddled with a conflict of interest he could not resolve, in a self-justification that melts on examination. I am the author of the only book giving this side, now almost dead as a result of press abdication of its traditional role, in this case in support of an official mythology when it should know better. I renew this request and make an offer not required by the fairness doctrine: have one of your people see and select the evidence I would present. Here also, I hope you will agree. The cost to you is negligible.

And, I again express the hope that in the past month the major media has seen enough to inspire it to reconsider what amounts to policy decisions on what is and can be news. I wish you'd read parts of the Black opinion and ask yourself if the situation is not, really, worse, when the press does this sort of thing on its own.

Sincerely, Harold Weisberg